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Avon Alters 'The Spike' After Lawsuit Threat

In response to a threat of legal action by the Institute for Policy Studies, a Washington-based organization that felt it was libeled in "The Spike" by Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss, Avon Books made some textual changes in its May reprint of the book. Crown Publishers, which issued the hardcover edition last year, agreed to make the same changes in any future hardcover printings.

IPS objected to the portrayal in "The Spike" of a fictitious "Institute for Progressive Reform," which was depicted as a KGB tool. IPS protested the name given to the fictional institute and the fact that its European satellite, called the "Multinational Institute," was located in Amsterdam. The IPS has a European subsidiary, the Transnational Institute, headquartered in Amsterdam.

Avon and Crown agreed to the following changes: "The Institute for Progressive Reform" was restyled "The Foundation for Progressive Reform," and the word Institute was changed to Foundation wherever it occurred; the name of the satellite, "Multinational Institute," was changed to "Third World Exchange," and its location was switched from Amsterdam to Brussels, with accompanying deletions concerning the locale.

"We didn't think of pressing any action against 'The Spike' for a long time," Bill Kaplan of IPS told PW, "because it was fiction—and, I think, trashy fiction at that. But in the course of the year many reviewers, including those at *The Washington Post*, *Harper's*, *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, said the Institute for Progressive Reform was intended to be IPS. When that pattern began to emerge, we felt we had to move." Kaplan said that Avon had responded quickly to the complaint.

Richard Sugarman, associate counsel for the Hearst Corporation, confirmed that the changes had been made,

saying, "We're reprinters; we're not in a position to check out accuracy. We simply contacted the hardcover publisher and were told that the authors agreed to the changes." A limited, English-language foreign edition had already been printed when IPS complained, Sugarman said, but all copies of the American paperback included the changes requested.

Nat Wartels, chairman of Crown, confirmed that the authors had agreed to the changes. "It didn't affect the story in any way, and it didn't matter to us, so we changed it," he said. "We didn't want to get into a big hassle over it, even though we could probably have defended it."